

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8623

INFO CINCSO FOR POLAD

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SANTO DOMINGO 3250

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, DR

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICAL ASSESSMENT: SECOND QUARTER 1973

REF: SD 1722

1. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL TENSIONS WHICH WERE GENERATED BY THE FEBRUARY GUERRILLA INCURSION CONTINUED TO SUBSIDE AS THE GOVERNMENT TOOK STEPS TO ELIMINATE THE REMAINING SECURITY MEASURES IT INSTITUTED AT THE TIME OF THE LANDING. MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THOSE DETAINED HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED WHILE THE GUERRILLAS WHO HAD TAKEN ASYLUM IN FOREIGN EMBASSIES OR WERE CAPTURED WERE PERMITTED TO GO INTO EXILE ABROAD. DESPITE THE PREVAILING CALM, HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANT PRESSURES WERE PUT ON THE NEWS MEDIA THROUGH LIBEL SUITS BROUGHT BY PRESIDENTIAL AIDE SOCRATES (CHINO) PICHARDO AGAINST, AMONG OTHERS, THE PRESTIGIOUS DAILY LISTIN DIARIO AND RADIO CONTINENTAL. THE MEDIA WAS FURTHER INTIMIDATED WHEN THE DIRECTOR OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SUSPENDED A RADIO INTERVIEW PROGRAM FOR WHAT HE TERMED "ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT AND INCITATION TO VIOLENCE." BOTH MEASURES HAVE GIVEN RISE TO FEARS OF FURTHER OFFICIAL RESTRAINTS ON THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND HAVE SERVED TO INHIBIT MEDIA ATTACKS ON THE BALAGUER GOVERNMENT.

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THE PUBLIC REAPPEARANCE FROM HIDING IN EARLY MAY OF PRD PRESIDENT

JUAN BOSCH AND SECRETARY GENERAL HOSE FRANCISCO PENA GOMEZ WAS FOLLOWED BY A MAJOR DIVISION IN THE PARTY FUELED BY MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, THE RESIGNATION OF PENA FROM HIS PARTY POST, AND THE SUSPENSION OF SOME OF HIS PARTISANS FROM PARTY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. AMIDST GENERAL CONFUSION AND DEMORALIZATION, THE PRD MOVED TO TRY TO RESTORE THE CONFIDENCE OF ITS MILITANTS BY PRESENTING A HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC DRAFT POLITICAL PROGRAM. THE THREE OTHER MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE PQD, MIDA, AND THE PRSC, MEANWHILE, STILL PROVED UNABLE TO FORGE OPPOSITION UNITY, REMAINING DIVIDED ON SEVERAL KEY ISSUES. THE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE PRO-BALAGUER MOVIMIENTO AGRARIO REFORMISTA (MAR), FURTHER MOVED TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS BY WRESTING CONTROL OF TWO PRD UNIONS AND APPLYING PRESSURE ON OTHER ANTI-GOVERNMENT LABOR GROUPS. IN THE MILITARY SECTOR, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, MAJOR GENERAL ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ, FURTHERED HIS POLICY OF REDUCING MAJOR GENERAL NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS' POWER BASE IN THE ARMED FORCES. NIVAR MEN WERE REMOVED FROM KEY POSTS IN THE POLICE AND THE ARMY'S TANK BATTALION WHILE PEREZ Y PEREZ CONSOLIDATED HIS CONTROL OVER THE KEY SAN CRISTOBAL BATTALION. DESPITE THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR POWER BETWEEN NIVAR AND PEREZ Y PEREZ, THE ARMED FORCES APPARENTLY REMAIN SOLIDLY UNITED BEHIND BALAGUER WHOSE HOLD OVER THE COUNTRY SEEMS FIRMER THAN EVER.

2. LAST TRACES OF FEBRUARY INVASION: DURING THE QUARTER, THE GODR CONTINUED TO ERASE TRACES OF THE REPRESSIVE ACTIONS IT UNDERTOOK AGAINST CERTAIN SECTORS OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN REACTION TO THE FEBRUARY GUERRILLA INCURSION. MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS ARRESTED AT THAT TIME, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED. IN ADDITION, THE GODR PROVIDED PUBLIC GUARANTEES FOR THE SAFETY OF PRD PRESIDENT JUAN BOSCH AND PARTY SECRETARY JOSE FRANCISCO PENA GOMEZ, AS A RESULT OF WHICH BOTH PRD LEADERS LEFT HIDING IN EARLY MAY. TWO OF THE SURVIVING GUERRILLAS, HAMLET HERMANN PEREZ AND CLAUDIO CAAMANO GRULLON, WERE ALLOWED TO GO INTO EXILE IN MEXICO WHILE THE LAST REMAINING GUERRILLA, CARLOS TORIBIO PENA JAQUES, WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY FOR CHILE.

3. MEANWHILE, THE SPATE OF MURDERS -- TWO POLICEMEN AND FIVE CIVILIANS -- WHICH FOLLOWED THE ASSASSINATION OF ULTIMA HORA
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EDITOR GREGORIO GARCIA CASTRO, WERE EITHER RESOLVED OR CONVENIENTLY FORGOTTEN. A RECURRENCE OF A LA BANDA-LIKE TERROR, WHICH WAS WIDELY FEARED AND PROPHESED AT THE TIME, DID NOT MATERIALIZE. POLICE CHIEF GENERAL SALVADOR LLUBERES MONTAS HAS MANAGED TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER WITHOUT RESORT TO EXCESSIVE COERCION AND SEEMS TO HAVE EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE MEDIA FOR HIS EVENHANDEDNESS. PARTIALLY AS A RESULT OF HIS FIRM BUT RESTRAINED ADMINISTRATION, THE SECURITY SCENE APPEARS CALM. WITH AN AIR OF TRAN-

QUILITY PREVAILING, DOMINICANS SEEMS TO BE FOCUSING THEIR ATTENTION LARGELY ON NON-POLITICAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SUMMER VACATIONS AND NATIONAL MERENGUE WEEK.

4. MOVES AGAINST THE MEDIA: ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS SUCCESSFULLY MOVED TO REDUCE POLITICAL TENSION, THERE WERE SEVERAL DISQUIETING INDICATIONS THAT FORCES WITHIN THE GODR WERE SEEKING TO CURB THE NEWS MEDIA WHICH HAS BEEN AN OUT-SPOKEN AND OFTEN EFFECTIVE CRITIC OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES. ON MAY 22, PRESIDENTIAL AIDE SOCRATES (CHINO) PICHARDO, WHO CLAIMED THAT HE WAS LIBELED BY A MARCH 30 LISTIN DIARIO EDITORIAL LINKING HIM TO THE SLAYING OF NESPAPERMAN GREGORIO GARCIA CASTRO, OBTAINED A LIEN AMOUNTING TO RD \$1.5 MILLION AGAINST EDITORA LISTIN, THE PUBLISHER OF LISTIN DIARIO AND ULTIMA HORA. PICHARDO, AN UNSCRUPULOUS AND AMBITIOUS EX-MECHANIC WITH REPORTED CLOSE TIES TO BALAGUER, NEXT OBTAINED A LIEN AGAINST RADIO CONTINENTAL FOR THE SAME AMOUNT, ALSO FOR ALLEGED DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER. HE ALSO HAS BROUGHT LIBEL CHARGES AGAINST THE HIGHLY RESPECTED JOURNALIST JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ. THESE NEW LEGAL MOVES

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BY PICHARDO EVOKED OUTRAGED PRESS DEMANDS THAT PICHARDO BE RESTRAINED. THE PESIDENT, WHO HAD EARLIER SUSPENDED PICHARDO FROM HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES PENDING SETTLEMENT OF HIS CASE, ORDERED

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CASE, ESPECIALLY THE WIDELY-HELD SUSPICION THAT THE SUIT WAS MOTIVATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO STIFLE THE PRESS. IN AN OPINION RELEASED JUNE 19, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORTED THAT "IN NO WAY" DID THE PICHARDO SUITS DEMONSTRATE A MOVE TO DIMINISH PRESS FREEDOM. INDEED, MOST INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS CONCEDE PICHARDO'S LEGAL RIGHT TO BRING SUIT AGAINST HIS PUBLIC DETRACTORS. WHAT IS FEARED, HOWEVER, IS THAT PICHARDO'S ACTIONS, IF SUCCESSFUL, WILL SERVE EFFECTIVELY TO STIFLE LEGITIMATE CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE.

5. THE PICHARDO SUIT AGAINST LISTIN CAME TO TRIAL ON JUNE 19 AMIDST TECHNICAL LEGAL CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES AND PROSPECTS OF A DRAWNOUT LEGAL BATTLE. ALTHOUGH NO ONE IS WILLING TO PREDICT HOW THE VARIOUS CASES WILL TERMINATE, THERE IS A POPULAR BELIEF THAT THE PRESIDENT MAY BE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PICHARDO'S ACTIONS TO WARN THE MEDIA INDIRECTLY THAT TOO STRONG AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT POSITION, ESPECIALLY AN OVERLY-CRITICAL POSITION ON THE REELECTION ISSUE, COULD CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THEM. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, ON JUNE 8, THE DIRECTOR OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SUSPENDED THE RADIO PROGRAM "LA CRONICA RADIAL" FOR WHAT HE TERMED " SUBVERSION OF DEMOCRATIC CONVICTIONS" AND "ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S HONOR." AS OF THIS WRITING, THE CASE HAS YET TO BE TAKEN TO THE COURTS ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAM REMAINS SUSPENDED. IN ANY EVENT, THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE MOVES ARE OMINOUS AND, IF CONTINUED, COULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE EFFECT ON PRESS FREEDOM IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

7. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION: THE GODR'S POLITICAL POSITION WAS RELATIVELY STRENGTHENED DURING THE QUARTER BY THE GROWING INTERNAL DISCORD WITHIN THE PRD AND THE EVIDENT INABILITY OF OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS TO REACH AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES. THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PRD, WHICH HAD BEEN WIDENING SINCE THE RETURN OF SECRETARY GENERAL PENA GOMEZ IN NOVEMBER 1972, BROKE INTO THE OPEN IN LATE APRIL WHEN THE BOSCH-CONTROLLED PRD PERMANENT COMMISSION SUSPENDED NINE PARTY LEADERS, MOST OF WHOM SUPPORTERS OF PENA GOMEZ. AS A RESULT, PENA GOMEZ RESIGNED HIS PARTY POST. PEN'S RESIGNATION WAS NOT GRACEFULLY ACCEPTED BY BOSCH WHO LASHED OUT AT HIS ERSTWHILE PROTEGE, PUBLICLY COMPARING HIM WITH LIN PIAO AND LEON TROTSKY. BOSCH APPEARS TO SUSPECT THAT PENA'S PERSONAL PRESTIGE AND POLITICAL FOLLOWING COULD CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO HIS OWN HIGHLY AUTHOIRTARIAN AND PERSONALISTIC HOLD OVER THE PRD.

9. ALTHOUGH BOSCH HAS CONTINUED TO USE EVERY PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY TO DENIGRATE PENA, THE LATTER HAS NOT PUBLICLY COUNTERED IN KIND. THOUGH REBUTTING SOME OF THE MORE DAMAGING OF BOSCH'S

ALLEGATIONS, HE HAS RESERVED HIS STRONGEST CRITICISM FOR THE BOSCH-DOMINATED PERMANENT COMMISSION. THE CONFRONTATION OF ITS TWO PRINCIPAL LEADERS HAS ALLEGEDLY CREATED A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PRD WITH THE RESULT THAT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AMONG MANY OF ITS PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL LEVEL CADRES HAVE VIRTUALLY CEASED.

9. PERHAPS TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM ITS INTERNAL STRUGGLES, THE PRD MADE PUBLIC ON JUNE 12 A HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC DRAFT POLITICAL PROGRAM WRITTEN BY THREE BOSCH STALWARTS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE DRAFT PROGRAM CALLED FOR A FRONTAL ATTACK ON UNEMPLOYMENT, AUTOMATIC SALARY ADJUSTMENTS KEYED TO A COST OF LIVING INDEX, LEGALIZATION OF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL

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PRISONERS, NATIONALIZATION OF GULF AND WESTERN AMERICAS CORPORATION AND ALL FOREIGN BANKS, AND EXPANSION OF THE STATE-CONTROLLED ECONOMIC SECTOR.

10. WITH THE PRD IN DISARRAY AND EXHIBITING NO EAGERNESS TO REJOIN TALKS WITH THE OTHER THREE MAJOR OPPOSITIONS PARTIES, THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO SOCIAL CRISTIANO (PRSC), THE PARTIDO QUISQUEYANO DEOMCRATA (PQD), AND THE MOVIMIENTO DE INTEGRACION DEMOCRATICA (MIDA) HAVE BEEN AS YET UNABLE TO REACH ANY SUBSTANTIVE DECISIONS AS TO THEIR COLLECTIVE POSTURE FOR THE 1974 ELECTIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN, HOWEVER, INDICATIONS THAT, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, THEY MIGHT IN FACT PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS. MEANWHILE, PRESSURES WITHIN THE PRD HAVE ALSO BEEN MOUNTING AGAINST THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S ABSTENTIONIST POLICY.

11. A SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC COMMENTARY, STAUNCHLY SUPPORTED BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION, HAS BEEN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SINGLE BALLOT AND THE EXTENSION OF THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD FROM THREE TO SIX MONTHS. PERHAPS TO STIMULATE THEIR INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN THE ELECTIONS - THE JUNTA CENTRAL ELECTORAL (JCE) RESPONDED BY MOVING FORWARD THE DATE OF THE OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 16 TO JANUARY 2, 1974. DESPITE CONTINUING PUBLIC AGITATION FOR A SINGLE BALLOT, HOWEVER, THE JCE HAS YET MADE NO MOVE IN THIS REGARD, INFLUENCED PERHAPS BY BALAGUER'S FIRM PUBLIC STANCE AGAINST IT.

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12. LABOR SECTOR: DURING THE QUARTER, THE GODR, USING AS ITS INSTRUMENT THE MAR, CONTINUED TO MOVE TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE THE POWER OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT LABOR UNIONS, ESPECIALLY PRD-CONTROLLED UNIONS, WHICH MIGHT HAVE SERVED AS A FOCUS FOR ANTI-BALAGUER RELECTION PLANS. MAR'S DYNAMIC PRESIDENT JOSE OSVALDO LEGER, AMID OPPOSITION CHARGES OF FRAUD, LED A PRO-GOVERNMENT GROUP IN THE ELECTORAL TAKE-OVER OF THE SANTO DOMINGO PORTWORKERS UNION (PAOSI) IN APRIL. MAR REPORTEDLY RECEIVED THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SECRETARIAT OF LABOR IN THE POASI TAKEOVER, AND AGAIN WAS ASSISTED BY THE SECRETARIAT WHEN MAR SUPPORTERS ARRANGED FOR THE FIRING OF PRD UNION LEADERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED SACK AND ROPE FACTORY IN MAY. IN ADDITION, THE MAR SEEMED TO BE INVOLVED IN AN ATTEMPT TO TAKE OVER THE PRD-CONTROLLED TAXI DRIVERS UNION, UNACHOSIN. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ABLE TO DEFEAT THE PRD SLATE IN THESE ELECTIONS, THE UNION HAS BEEN SO WEAKENED BY CONSTANT GOVERNMENT HARRASSMENT AND DEFECTIONS THAT IT HAS CEASED TO BE OF MAJOR POLITICAL IMPORTANCE.

13. THE MILITARY: THE WEAKENING OF MAJOR GENERAL NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS' INFLUENCE IN THE SECURITY FORCES WAS FURTHER ACCENTUATED DURING THE QUARTER. NIVAR'S ARCHRIAL, MAJOR GENERAL ENRIQUE PEREZ Y CONFIDENTIAL

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PEREZ, WAS ABLE TO MAKE STOCK HIS APRIL REMOVAL OF NIVARISTA COL MANUEL LACHAPELLE SUERO FROM THE THIRD BATTALION IN SAN CRISTOBAL, AND HAS NOW BEGUN TO BUILD THAT UNIT TO FULL STRENGTH. NIVAR SUFFERED ANOTHER BLOW WHEN THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMORED BATTALION WHOM HE HAD REPORTEDLY RECENTLY SUBORNED WAS TRANS-

FERRED TO AN INSIGNIFICANT POST. STILL ANOTHER REVERSE WAS DEALT TO THE AMBITIOUS NIVAR WHEN LT COL CAONABO ROSARIO REYNOSO, THE CHIEF OF THE SECRET SERVICE, WAS TRANSFERRED AND A PEREZ Y PEREZ MAN WAS NAMED TO SUCCEED HIM. WHILE NIVAR TOOK HIS LUMPS ON THE MILITARY SIDE, HE SEEMED TO BE FIGHTING BACK ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, USING AS LEVERAGE HIS POSITION AS SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE PRESIDENCY. NIVAR WAS RUMORED TO BE BEHIND A CAMPAIGN TO PUT HIMSELF IN THE VICE PRESIDENCY IN 1974 AND WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY ACTIVELY TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE REFORMIST PARTY'S LOCAL LEVEL MACHINERY FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL BENEFIT. NIVAR'S POLITICAL GAINS, HOWEVER, DO NOT SEEM TO BE COMMENSURATE WITH PEREZ Y PEREZ' CONQUESTS IN THE MILITARY FIELD. AT THIS MOMENT AT LEAST, NIVAR'S POWER POSITION SEEMS TO BE DECLINING AS PEREZ Y PEREZ IS INCREASINGLY CONSOLIDATING HIS OWN STRENGTH WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. ALTHOUGH NIVAR APPARENTLY IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE SITUATION, THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT, UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, HE WILL RESORT TO VIOLENT MEANS TO REDRESS THE GROWING POWER IMBALANCE. NONETHELESS, BALAGUER, DESPITE THE CONTINUING CONFLICT BETWEEN HIS TWO MOST POWERFUL GENERALS, CONTINUES TO ENJOY THE FULL SUPPORT AND LOYALTY OF THE ARMED FORCES.

14. CONCLUSION: PRESIDENT BALAGUER SEEMS IN A STRONGER POSITION POLITICALLY THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE HIS FIRST INAUGURATION SEVEN YEARS AGO. THE TENSION CAUSED BY THE GUERRILLA LANDING HAS LARGELY DISAPPEARED AND THAT EVENT IS RAPIDLY FADING FROM THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS. THE FEARS AND ANXIETIES AROUSED BY THE SPATE OF MURDERS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN APRIL HAVE PROVED TO BE SHORTLIVED AS POLICE CHIEF LLUBERES MONTAS MOVED TO CREATE A FEELING OF RELATIVE SECURITY AMONG THE CITIZENRY ALARMED BY THE GARCIA CASTRO ASSASSINATION AND ITS AFTERMATH. THE MOVES AGAINST LISTIN AND RADIO CONTINENTAL BY EX-PRESIDENTIAL AIDE PICHARDO HAS HAD A SOBERING EFFECT ON THE MEDIA WHICH HAS CLEARLY BEEN PLACED ON THE DEFENSIVE. AS A RESULT OF PICHARDO'S INITIATIVES, THERE HAS BEEN A PERCEPTIBLE DECREASE IN VIRULENT ATTACKS ON THE GODR AND A MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO BALAGUER'S REELECTION. BALAGUER HAS BEEN FURTHER STRENGTHENED BY THE DIVISIONS IN THE PRD WHICH HAVE,

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FOR THE MOMENT, LEFT MANY PARTY MILITANTS UNENTHUSIASTIC OR ANTAGONISTIC TOWARD THE BOSCH-DOMINATED PARTY LEADERSHIP. BOSCH OFTEN SEEMS MORE CONCERNED WITH MAINTAINING TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE PARTY THAN CONFRONTING BALAGUER. AS A RESULT, THE PARTY'S ENERGIES AND EFFORTS ARE INCREASINGLY DIRECTED INWARD, ABSORBED IN UNPRODUCTIVE INTERNAL SQUABBLES RATHER THAN AIMED AT COUNTERING BALAGUER'S RELECTION BID. BALAGUER IS UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO PLEASED WITH THE APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY OF THE PQD, MIDA, AND THE PRSC TO AGREE ON A COMMON FRONT. DESPITE MANY MONTHS OF PUBLIC DIALOGUE AND PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS, OPPOSITION UNITY SEEMS AS ELUSIVE AS EVER. AS THE DOMINICAN ECONOMY CONTINUES TO EXPAND, AND BALAGUER IS INCREASINGLY ENGAGED

IN INAUGURATING A SERIES OF IMPRESSIVE PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS,
THE OPPOSITION'S HOPES OF LEGALLY PREVENTING THE PRESIDENT'S
RELECTION NEXT MAY SEEM DIMMER THAN EVER. IN FACT, UNLESS
BALAGUER DIES OR SUFFERS AN INCAPACITATING ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS,
HIS REELECTION ALREADY SEEMS VIRTUALLY ASSURED.
CROWLEY

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